

DOING IT RIGHT

A Pet Store Employee's Guide to Professional Success [and Fun!]



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“Pride is a personal commitment. It is an attitude which separates excellence from mediocrity.”

Author Unknown

Take Pride in Your Work!

As a pet store employee, you have good reason to take pride in your work. Not only do you serve the needs of the store and the team you work with, but you also serve the many animals that come through the store and the people who love them. As a pet store employee, you are a:

- Team Member
- Care Giver
- Public Educator
- Role Model


This booklet is designed to help you be an exceptional pet store employee – it will help you serve the store, your team, the animals, and your community with pride. And, we hope that it will also provide you and your co-workers with a few good laughs! “*Doing It Right*” can be a lot of fun.

The following section (Chapter 1) will help you work effectively with your co-workers and contribute your best as a team member. Later sections provide specific guidance on animal care (Chapter 2) and public interaction (Chapters 3 & 4). The final sections provide information on the *Habitattitude™*

campaign (Chapter 5) and additional resources (Chapter 6) available through the Pet Industry Advisory Council (PIJAC).

We encourage you to discuss the information in this booklet with your co-workers – to find creative and fun ways to work together to *do it right*. You can, for example, photocopy the cartoons in this manual and post them in a place in the store where the entire staff can enjoy them, as well as benefit from the helpful reminders they provide. You might even look for other relevant cartoons, magazine ads, and photos to add to your collection.

Furthermore, we recommend that you hang this booklet in a prominent location where it is easily accessible to all staff. If you place it in the section of the store where animals are housed, it will be readily available for staff to reference and be visible to your customers – let it be known that the store has a team of professional staff who care enough to *do it right*.

 **REMEMBER:** You are more than just an employee, you are a team member, care giver, public educator, and role model! Take pride in your work and enjoy it.

Chapter 1

JOINING THE TEAM



“Individual commitment to a group effort — that is what makes a team work, a company work, a society work, a civilization work.”

Vince Lombardi, NFL football coach

Be a Team Player!

Congratulations on your job. As a pet store employee, you have been invited to join a very important team – a team with lots of responsibility. The suggestions provided in the following section will not only help you *do it right*, but be a “player of the year.”

■ **Have a winning attitude** – In other words, be upbeat and positive about your work and take pride in the service you are providing. It will make a difference for the store, your co-workers, and...most importantly...the animals awaiting new homes.

■ **Respect and learn from your teammates** – Your co-workers can be a tremendous asset. Get to know their interests, talents, and expertise. Perhaps one of them knows quite a bit about reptiles, and another about fish or birds. Maybe one of them is really good at interacting with the public. Learn as much as you can from each of them – you, the animals, your co-workers, and the customers will all benefit from your growing expertise. Be sure to ask great questions!


■ **Communicate well and often** – If you are unsure about certain aspects of your job, ask questions of your co-workers (they are, after all, your teammates). If you have observations to share about animal needs and care, discuss them with the appropriate co-workers in a constructive and timely manner. The

better the communication among a store's employees, the better the store environment for the animals and the customers.

■ **Share in the challenges and successes** – If challenges arise in the store (for example, sick animals or a disgruntled customer), work together to solve the problems – without blame. Also, collectively enjoy in the store's success: pets finding good homes, a co-worker's promotion, positive feedback from customers, etc.

■ **Have fun** – No doubt, you and your co-workers took your jobs at least in part because you thought you'd enjoy working with pets. So, be responsible – *do it right* – and, enjoy the animals, look forward to the interactions with the customers, and make some time as a team to have fun.

■ **Think long term** – While many pet store employees regard their jobs as short-term (perhaps just for a school holiday), consider what the store has to offer you for long-term training and career advancement. Not only will you learn to care for the animals, but you also have terrific opportunities to develop your communication and marketing skills, facilities management expertise, and, depending on the store, you might even be able to learn accounting and other basic business skills. The longer you are with the store, the better you can serve the animals, the pet loving public, and your teammates.

 **REMEMBER:** In the pet store business, a team player is a successful employee! Collaborate with your co-workers to *do it right*.

Chapter 2

PET CARE



“Animals are such agreeable friends – they ask no questions; they pass no criticisms.”

George Eliot, Author – *Mr. Gilfil's Love Story*

INTRODUCTION Give Them the Best Care Possible!

The animals in the store depend on *you*. Until they are sold or adopted, you and your co-workers are their caretakers. Enjoy their company and treat them well – as a result, your job will be all the more rewarding and enjoyable!

There are, of course, additional reasons to take excellent care of the store's fish and other animals:

- Pet stores that house companion animals are held to high ethical standards – by government regulators, the animal welfare community, the media, and customers.

- Laws governing animal welfare exist at national, state, and local levels. Ultimately, such laws are good for the animals and good for business. Because...

- What people experience in pet stores affects the entire pet industry. A newspaper story about poor pet store practices (for example, the way dogs or fish are housed) will impact that store, other pet stores, and possibly the pet product manufacturers and distributors as well. Of course, when you *do it right*, good news benefits everyone!

- Pet owners look to pet stores as models of animal care and turn to store staff – *you* – for advice on a wide variety of animal care issues.

- And, it's just the *right thing to do*...


We encourage you to not only take excellent care of the fish and other animals while they are in your store, but also to ensure the humane care and happiness of the animals when they are sold or adopted. Thus, in Chapter 3 we present ideas for educating the public on animal care.

In the following section we provide you with general guidance for animal care and handling. We wish that we could provide you with detailed information on every type of pet. Unfortunately, due to the wide variety of animals maintained in pet stores, it is impossible for us to describe the specific care and handling needs of each species in a single booklet.

However, your store owner might have a staff library that includes books, videos, and CDs on both general and species-specific pet care that you are welcome to use to more fully educate yourself.

Do it even better: Some stores create a library of reference materials on animal biology and care that is readily available to store staff.

We provide a list of additional resources in Chapter 6.

 **REMEMBER:** The animals in the store depend on you.

And, you depend on the welfare of the animals for your job security and enjoyment, as well as a sense of a *job well done*. You deserve to take pride in your good work!

Learn as Much as You Can

Become an animal care expert. Use your store's resources, the public library, credible internet sites (pay attention to the qualifications of the author), and brochures provided in the store (for example, animal care fact sheets) to learn as much as possible about the specific types of animals in the store. You can also turn to local animal breeders, hobbyists, public zoo and aquaria staff, veterinarians, and more experienced co-workers for information and advice.

Do it even better: Ask your store owner/manager to create a contact list of local experts who you and your co-workers can turn to for information and assistance on animal care, especially for those species maintained in your store. Post the list in a place that is easily accessible to all staff and update the contact list regularly.

Being well-informed about the biology of the animals in your store will not only help you properly care for the animals, but will also prepare you to effectively assist your customers (per Chapters 3-5).

Here is a list of the questions you will want to explore for each species:

■ **Origin** – In what region/countries is the species native?

■ **History in Captivity** – How long has this species been available in the pet trade? Are most of the animals captive bred or captured in the wild? If captive-bred, are individuals of the species with interesting color and pattern variations in the market?

■ **Size** – How big do they grow? How long does it take them to get that large? What factors (for example, temperature and feeding rates) influence growth rates?

■ **Age** – How long is the animal likely to live if well cared for?

■ **Gender and Reproduction** – Can you distinguish males from females? If so, how? How often do they reproduce? How can you tell when the female is coming into breeding condition?

■ **Housing** – What type of housing is best suited to the different breeds of dogs and cats (based on age, size, and temperament)? For other species, ask - What are the natural conditions that animal lives in and how can they be duplicated as closely as possible in the captive environment? Consider: substrate, temperature, light, and water/moisture.

■ **Diet** – What type of diet is best suited to the different breeds of dogs and cats (based on age, size, and temperament)? For other species, ask – What type of food does the animal eat in the wild? How can you duplicate this as closely as possible, in a nutritionally balanced way for animals in captivity?

■ **Behavior** – What is the animal's normal behavior? Would it benefit from hiding places, objects to climb on, or toys to play with? Can it be aggressive toward people or other animals (if so, what kinds)?

■ **Permits** – Are there Federal, state, or local permits that are required to keep and/or breed this species? If so, how are those permits obtained?

We encourage you to both memorize what you learn about the various types of pets (People visiting the store are going to ask you questions!) and add your findings to the store's resource library.

Do it even better: Encourage your store's manager to create a file folder or reference binder for organizing information on each species. Take time to add to it any new information you find. Your co-workers will benefit from the information as well. This can help enhance the professionalism of the entire team.

Use Common Sense

Sometimes surprises happen in pet stores – animals thought to be of the same gender produce offspring; one type of animal is eaten by another thought to be compatible; and, despite the best available information, some animals just don't thrive in their enclosures. When such events occur, 1) use common sense to attend to the immediate challenges, 2) inform co-workers of the lessons learned, and 3) document the lessons learned in the staff library for future co-workers.

*** Remember:** A knowledgeable employee is a successful employee, and learning about the biology of the various types of pets can be interesting and fun!



ANIMAL CARE PRACTICES

Take Great Care of the Animals



As a pet store employee, you are an animal caretaker. The conditions in which the animals live, even for the short time they are in the store, can have a significant effect on their health,

happiness, and behavior. A fish or other animal that is clearly thriving is much more likely to find a new home than one that is listless and clearly upset or nervous. Furthermore, animals that are under stress due to poor care are more likely to become sick or injured.

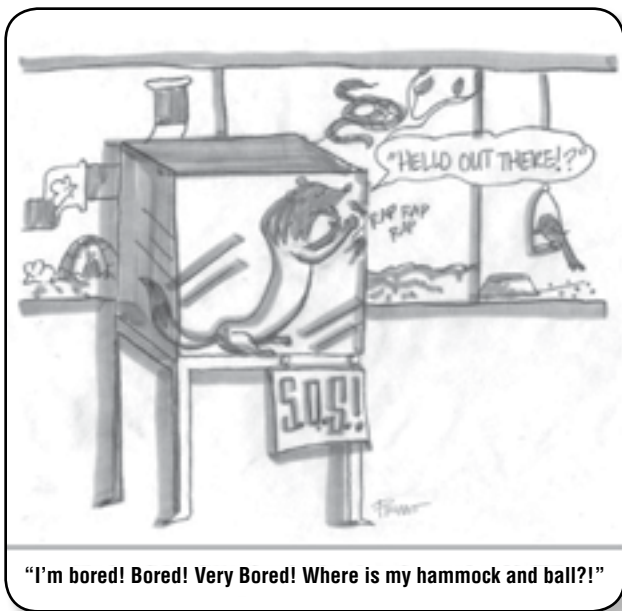
Carefully follow the animal care plan provided by the store owner/livestock manager.

Do it even better: If your store does not have a written animal care plan for each species, encourage the owner/livestock manager to develop one that is readily accessible to the staff. Use your knowledge of each species and common sense to care for the animals until a store plan is developed.

Ideally, the plan will provide guidance on how best to:

Give Them a Good Home – In Store

- House animals in a manner that is appropriate to their size and type. For example, large animals need large enclosures. Aquatic (water living) animals need plenty of water. Carefully consider what you've learned about the needs of each pet species.



■ House animals in a manner that minimizes stress. Avoid placing animals in areas where they will be exposed to temperature fluctuations or drafts, loud or shrill noises (including radios), or noxious or harmful odors.

■ Place only compatible animals together in the same primary enclosure. Consider species, age, size, gender, condition, and behavioral tendencies when evaluating compatibility.

■ Use enclosures and equipment designed and maintained to minimize the risk of illness or injury to both animals and employees.

■ Protect animals from distress or injury that can be caused by other animals (both those housed in the store and those visiting the store) or excessive handling. Supervise customers who want to hold the animals, and know which kinds of animals (for example, some types of amphibians and reptiles, or animals that are nervous) are not appropriate for regular handling.

■ House individual animals at temperatures and moisture levels that are species-appropriate (for example, provide heaters, hot pads, pools of water, etc. as needed). Be sure to monitor the heaters and water levels so as to ensure animal safety.



- Make sure animal enclosures are adequately ventilated to provide for the health and comfort of the animals at all times. Pay attention to species-specific temperature requirements.

- Maintain lighting at sufficient levels to allow for normal health, behavior and stimulation of all animals. Add supplemental lighting to individual terrariums and aquariums if necessary to support the lighting requirements of specific species. Provide shelter for those species that have low lighting requirements.

- Provide effective shelter for animals that may be exposed to direct sunlight through windows or in outdoor environments.

- Provide animals, relevant to the type and age, with toys and other items (for example, wheels, ladders, balls, hammocks, plastic plants) that will provide for adequate exercise, enrichment, shelter, and the semblance of habitat.

- Observe the animals routinely throughout your work shift and immediately attend to any animals that are sick or dead. (See following sections on health care and waste removal for more details). Pay close attention to the aquaria section! Dead fish might spread diseases to live fish and can cause problems for the filtering system. Furthermore, dead fish and other animals are likely to lead customers to conclude that the animals are not well cared for and the staff is less than professional. Would you buy a pet from such a store?

Do it even better: Encourage the store owner/livestock manager to make plans and provisions to provide adequate housing for all animals in the case of natural disasters or other emergencies, and to train staff in emergency response procedures.

 **REMEMBER:** The animals depend on you to know and meet their individual needs!

Feed the Animals Well

■ Provide food that is wholesome, nutritious, readily digestible, and uncontaminated in sufficient quantities to maintain the animal in good health. Read the ingredients on food packaging, as well as the directions for feeding. Note: Just because the animal likes the taste of the food, doesn't mean the food is nutritious.


■ Feed animals with consideration for the species, age, condition, size, and gender of the individual animal. Feeding frequencies and amounts vary according to the species, and sometimes with the animal's age.

■ Feed the animals—other than certain amphibians and reptiles—at least once a day, including Sundays and holidays, except as necessitated by hibernation (or other types of dormancy) requirements, veterinary treatment, or other requirements specific to the species.

■ Observe how much the animals are eating and report animals that are not eating well to the store owner/livestock manager as soon as possible.

Do it even better: Encourage the owner/livestock manager to establish a daily feeding log for the store animals and enter the type of food and amount of food offered, as well as the amount of food eaten every day (except for those few species that it is not appropriate to feed daily). Use lessons learned from the feeding patterns observed in the log to make adjustments to feeding plans and to inform new owners how best to care for their new pets.

- Store food in a manner (for example, metal or hard plastic bins) that protects it from deterioration, mold or contamination by rodents, insects, or disease-causing organisms.
- Refrigerate perishable foods at appropriate temperatures.
- Where appropriate, serve food in sanitizable feeding pans, dishes or self-feeders, or in disposable food dishes.
- Sanitize feeding pans and dishes once a day, or as appropriate for the species. To prevent molding, caking, or contamination of food, regularly clean equipment designed to “self-feed” pets.
- Discard disposable food dishes immediately after the animal has finished feeding.
- Remove spoiled food from animal enclosures and adjust feeding practices so as to prevent future food spoilage.

 **REMEMBER:** Animals have a wide range of dietary requirements that differ with age or size, species, and health condition. Pay close attention to their individual dietary needs.

Provide Animals with Adequate Water

- Provide all animals, other than aquatic (water living) organisms, with clean (potable) drinking water at least once during each 12-hour period, except as necessitated by hibernation (or other types of dormancy) requirements, veterinary treatment, or other needs specific to the species.
- Use sanitizable water vessels that are designed to provide and dispense appropriate quantities of water for the particular species.
- Position water vessels so that they are readily accessible to the animals, and so as to prevent spillage, overheating, contamination, and use by animals visiting the store.
- When cleaning water vessels, use effective cleaners and disinfectants that comply with Federal, state and local laws and regulations.

- Clean and sanitize water vessels at least once daily, and clean sipper-tube water bottles (for example, the type of water bottles used for most rodents) at least twice a week to prevent the accumulation of dirt, debris, algae, and micro-organisms.

- Sanitize sipper-tube water bottles before placing new animals in a primary enclosure.

*** REMEMBER:** All animals need a constant supply of clean water!

ANIMAL AND HUMAN HEALTH

Conduct Thorough Health Checks



As a pet store employee, the animals in the store depend on you to ensure their health and safety. The more attention you can give to their care, the healthier and happier they will be – and

the more likely it is that they will find new homes. Furthermore, your supervisors, customers, the media, animal welfare groups, and law enforcement officials will all measure your success by the health of the pets in the store.

- Carefully follow the health check protocol provided by the store's owner or livestock manager.

Do it even better: If your store does not have a written health check protocol, encourage your store owner/livestock manager to create one, and to train all employees on how to administer the protocol. See Chapter 6: Additional Resources.

Ideally, the protocol will cover the following points:

- As soon as possible, carefully inspect the health of each new animal that comes into the store. If an animal shows signs of illness or injury, immediately inform the store's owner or livestock manager, and encourage them to inform the supplier. Then, immediately attend to the animal's needs.

Do it even better: Some stores maintain a list of suppliers that have sold sick or injured animals to the store and use this list in order to make wise decisions about future purchases.

- Once the animals have cleared their initial intake health check, visually conduct subsequent health checks at least twice a day (once in the morning, once in the evening) – every day that the animal is still in the store.
- Observe animals to determine whether they are:
 - Behaving normally (evaluate by species, age, and gender).
 - Able to move normally and assume normal body positions.
 - Showing any obvious signs of distress or illness.
 - Eating adequately.
 - Drinking adequately.
 - Defecating and urinating normally.

■ Carefully evaluate for general signs of illness, disease or injury, including but not limited to:

- Abnormal condition or behavior (per species, age, and gender).
- Listlessness (having lower energy than would be normal for the species, and perhaps even seeming depressed).
- Failure to eat or decreased appetite.
- Weight loss (especially rapid weight loss).
- Diarrhea (especially if bloody).
- Eye or nasal discharge.
- Conjunctivitis (discharge from the eyes).
- Labored breathing (for example, notice if they are panting hard).
- Elevated respiration rate (for example, notice if they are taking lots of short, shallow breaths).
- Cough (especially one that sounds like it might be associated with chest congestion).
- Prostration (notice if the animal is stretched out and laying in the enclosure abnormally).
- Skin lesions (especially if oozing puss and/or has a bad smell).

- Abnormal hair or feather loss (notice if they are pulling out their own hair or feathers, or excessively rubbing against the enclosure).
- Evidence of fleas, ticks, or other parasites.

■ As soon as possible, report any concerns you have about an animal's physical health or well-being to the store's owner or livestock manager. If their assistance is not immediately available, seek advice from the store's consulting veterinarian or other qualified expert.

*** REMEMBER: Healthy pets make for successful stores and happy employees!**



Handle Sick or Injured Animals with Care



As a pet store employee, ensuring human health and safety is just as important as attending to the animals' health care. If you miss work, the animals have one less caregiver. And, if you, a co-worker, or customer is injured or infected by an animal in the store, the store owner might be ethically, or even legally,

required to euthanize the animal. Thus, in the best interest of the animals, as well human safety:

■ Educate yourself about animal diseases and disease prevention (See Chapter 6 – Additional Resources). Animals can harbor disease-causing organisms that can be transmitted to people – including you, your co-workers, and customers. It is also possible for people to transmit diseases to the animals. In order to reduce the risks of disease:

- Adhere to store policies for animal care and handling (See previous sections on these topics).
- Wash your hands with disinfectant soap after being in contact with the animals, as well as enclosures, food and water dishes, toys, and other items. Be sure to follow the store's policies for personal hygiene practices.

Do it even better: If your store does not have a personal hygiene policy, encourage the store owner to adopt one and post it where employees can easily refer to it – in the washroom, for example.

- If you work with reptiles and small mammals, learn about the risks of *Salmonella* and other potential zoonotic diseases (diseases that can be transmitted between humans and animals), and how to reduce the risk of infection.
 - If you work with birds, learn about the risks of Psittacosis and other potential zoonotic diseases, and how to reduce the risk of infection.
 - If you are pregnant or immune-compromised, consult with your personal physician regarding the risks of zoonotic diseases, as well as any special precautions you can take to avoid illness while working in the store.
- Be aware that a sick or injured animal, especially one that is in pain or frightened, might behave aggressively toward people and other animals – understandably, it wants to protect itself. Take appropriate measures to safeguard yourself, co-workers, and customers when an animal in the store is suspected to be sick or ill-tempered due to illness, injury, or stress. For example:
- Based on the health checks outlined previously, report any animal showing a health-related or behavior-related change or injury to the staff person responsible for taking appropriate action (usually the store owner or livestock manager, or the store’s consulting veterinarian).
 - If the animal is deemed to be sick, injured, or ill-tempered, carefully remove it from the sales floor and maintain it in a quiet location until it is fully recovered.
 - Immediately wash your hands and sanitize equipment, toys, and other items that have been in contact with sick animals (see the section entitled *Keep the Store Clean* for further information).
 - Provide immediate medical care for any sick or injured animal to ensure its well-being and to prevent the spread of disease.
 - If necessary, seek advice (on handling and medical care) and treatment from veterinary experts. Be sure to provide the veterinarian with a readable copy of your health care records.
 - Record your initial and ongoing observations of the animal’s physical health and behavior in appropriate animal health records (See next section and Chapter 6 – Additional Resources).
 - If an animal is suspected of having a disease that is contagious to humans or other animals, place it in a location away from other susceptible animals (depending on the type of disease), the public, and any co-workers not involved in providing for its care. Be sure to let all co-workers know there is an animal

in isolation. Keep the animal isolated until it is completely recovered or transferred to a veterinarian for treatment.

- Ask your store owner, livestock manager, or consulting veterinarian about Federal, state and local laws and/or regulations concerning reportable diseases. Encourage the appropriate co-worker to report relevant diseases as appropriate.

 **REMEMBER: Sick or injured animals need immediate assistance and careful handling!**

Thoughtfully Address Euthanasia

Unfortunately, there are times when a veterinarian or qualified, senior staff member will have to make the decision to euthanize an animal (sometimes referred to as “putting an animal to sleep”). This decision might be made if, for example, an animal seems to be suffering from a permanent disability or an incurable condition (including viciousness), or if the animal has a highly contagious disease. Ideally, such conditions have been diagnosed by at least one qualified veterinarian using American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) protocols before euthanasia is considered.

- If you believe an animal is suffering from a permanent, debilitating health condition, make the store owner, livestock manager, or staff veterinarian aware of the animal's problems as soon as possible.
- Keep the animal in a quiet location until the appropriate staff member can evaluate it.
- If an animal is euthanized,
 - Find a way to constructively express your emotions over its loss to co-workers, friends, and family.
 - Constructively work with other staff members to evaluate store operating procedures. Determine how they need to be modified so as to prevent other animals from suffering such disabilities in the future. Note: Avoid blaming yourself or anyone else for the animal's condition. Instead, focus on the lessons learned and how to prevent such problems in the future.

Do it even better: Encourage the store owner or other appropriate staff member to hold a special “listening session” in which you and other co-workers have the opportunity to express your feelings about the loss of the animal, as well as your ideas for *doing animal care right* – and even better.

- As soon as possible, make all the necessary adjustments to your pet care practices to ensure animal health and safety, and encourage co-workers to do the same.

*** REMEMBER:** If an animal has to be euthanized, learn from the experience and help decide how the store team can prevent such problems from happening in the future.



RECORD KEEPING

Maintain High Quality Animal Care Records

Ideally, your store owner or livestock manager will ask you to maintain a readable, individual history and health record for each dog and cat. In some stores, you might be asked to keep such records for other types of animals as well. These records will serve at least three purposes: 1) to ensure the health and welfare of the animals, 2) to enable your supervisors to evaluate your job performance, and 3) to keep the store in compliance with state or local record-keeping requirements.

Do it even better: If your store does not maintain written animal care records, encourage the appropriate senior staff member to initiate this practice – it is good for the animals, the store, and yes, your job security...such records will enable your supervisors to tell that you are *doing it right* – perhaps even exceptionally well. See Chapter 6 – Additional Resources.

- For dogs and cats, you will typically want to include such information as:
 - The name of the animal, if known.
 - A detailed description of the animal, including species,

breed and scientific name where required by Federal, state or local law.

- The animal's specific date of birth, if known.
- The name and address of the person/dealer from whom the animal was obtained, and the dealer's Federal identification number, if available.
- Information from any identification system, such as microchips, bands, tags or retinal scans, used to distinguish the animal.
- The date of acquisition (by purchase, donation, consignment, or adoption).
- Notes about all vaccines administered to the animal while in your pet store, including the date of administration, name and location of the person who administered the vaccine, the manufacturer, and the lot number.
- Notes about any health or behavioral problems the animal had prior to arriving in your pet store, if known.
- Notes about any health or behavioral problems observed while the animal is in your pet store, including but not limited to:

—Signs of illness.

—Diagnosis of illness (ideally by a veterinarian).

—Treatment and/or medication administered.

—Prognosis (for example, likelihood of full recovery), if known.

—Aggressiveness toward staff, customers, or other animals.

- The date of sale, transfer, or other disposition (including death if it occurs while the animal is “owned” by the store) of the animal.
- The name and address of the animal's new owner.

■ For animals other than dogs and cats, you might also want to include:

- A full description of the lot (group of animals purchased together), including species, breed and scientific name, as appropriate.
- The name and address of the person/dealer from whom the lot was obtained, and the dealer's Federal identification number, if available.
- The date of the lot's acquisition.

- Notes about any health or behavioral problems observed while the lot was in your pet store, as well as any treatment and/or medication administered.
- Other information as required for animals subject to Federal, state or local regulatory control. Note: In order for stores to possess and sell certain species which are rare or threatened in the wild, or that might cause problems if they are released into the wild (see *Habitattitude*TM – Chapter 5), the store must have permits or licenses from the government and strictly adhere to specific record keeping procedures. If the store fails to comply, they might lose their permits, receive fines or other criminal penalties, and the animals will be confiscated. If such permits are required for any of the animals in your store.
- Ensure that you know: 1) where to locate these documents and 2) how to appropriately share them with an inspector if a governmental official requests to see them while you are working.

- Ideally, your store will have a well-organized filing system for maintaining health care records. We highly recommend that you keep all animal health care records for a period of two (2) years unless otherwise required by Federal, state or local laws.

Do it even better: If your store does not maintain health care records, encourage your store owner or other appropriate staff person to set up such a filing system and help maintain it in a well-organized fashion.

*** REMEMBER: Animal care records benefit the animals, the store, and you!**



FACILITIES MANAGEMENT

Keep the Store Clean



Although cleaning the store might not be as interesting or fun as working directly with the animals, the job is just as important and equally necessary. First impressions do make a difference – If you walked into an impressively clean pet store one day and a filthy pet store the next, which one would you conclude had the healthier animals and more professional staff? Correct.

In fact, a “sick store” can contribute to animal stress, injury, and disease (See previous sections). Even if the animals in such a store are healthy, the *perception* that they might be sickly can keep them from finding new homes. Let the customers see that you are *doing it right* – keep your store clean and well-organized, and take pride in its appearance.

Clean and Organize the Store

- Carefully follow the store’s facilities management plan.

Do it even better: If your store does not have a facilities management plan, encourage the store owner to develop one and train the staff how to implement it.

Ideally, the plan will address, in detail, all the points provided here under *Facilities Management*.

- Keep the premises (building and grounds) clean, uncluttered, and in good repair. Pay close attention to the cleanliness of floors, counter tops, and other areas prone to high use by customers.

- Maintain well-organized product stock and attractive displays. Be sure to keep large, heavy objects on low shelves in order to protect customers and co-workers from falling objects.

- Clean and disinfect all confinement, display, storage and sales areas as needed to minimize rodent, insect, pathogen, and parasite infestations and to ensure sanitary conditions, as appropriate for each species.

- When cleaning the animal enclosures, clean and disinfect all toys and other items (wheels, ladders, balls, hammocks, plastic plants, for example) maintained in the animal enclosures to provide exercise, enrichment, shelter, and the semblance of habitat. Be sure to rinse and dry these items before returning them to the enclosures.

- Use effective cleaners and disinfectants that comply with Federal, state and local laws and regulations. Be sure to follow the directions on the labels.

Remove Waste in a Timely Manner



- Place trash in low traffic, non-public areas and clear it as necessary to ensure the health of all the animals.

- Remove excreta from primary enclosures as often as practicable to minimize disease hazards (for example, *Salmonella* transmission) and reduce odor.


- If your store allows the public to bring their pets into the store, keep an eye on these animals and quickly clean up any urine or feces they leave behind. You might also need to sanitize store products that they licked or had in their mouths.

- When hosing down or flushing out animal enclosures, ensure that the animals are protected from direct or indirect water spray. This can be achieved by providing shelter for the animals or moving them into alternate enclosures or runs while their primary enclosures are being cleaned.

- Remove all standing water. In particular, ensure that water does not accumulate under equipment, partitions, animal enclosures or elsewhere.

- Remove and dispose of animal and food wastes, used bedding, deceased animals, trash and debris.

Ideally, the store will have disposal methods and facilities in place that comply with applicable Federal, state and local laws and regulations relating to pollution control and environmental protection.

 **REMEMBER:** Remove all garbage and animal waste as soon as feasibly possible to prevent odor, disease, and pest problems!

Control Pests

Pest insects and wild mice or rats can make a mess in the store. Some species can also transmit parasites and disease to the pets, as well as store staff and customers. A clean, well-maintained store is likely to have few pest problems. However, sometimes even a clean store, because of its general location or other factors, has to take extra measures to prevent and control pests. Ideally, your store owner will have a pest management plan in place (as part of the facilities management plan) and seek advice and assistance from pest control experts as needed. If you are asked to assist with pest control measures, be sure to:

- Use chemicals or other pest control materials in compliance with Federal, state and local laws and regulations (seek relevant information on package labels and websites).

- Use chemicals or other pest control materials in accordance with manufacturers' instructions (see labels), paying careful attention to instructions for use in areas frequented by pets and people.

- Store chemicals in appropriate (follow regulations and product standards), clearly labeled containers away from public areas.

*** REMEMBER:** Carefully consider your safety and animal health whenever applying chemicals to control pests!

Maintain Well-Working Facilities

Ultimately, the store owner is responsible for maintaining the store in good working order. However, as part of the store team, you can help keep the facilities in the best condition for the safety of the animals by taking the time to:

- Maintain ambient temperatures at all times (including weekends and holidays) in the facility at a minimum of 60° F and a maximum of 85° F, and ensure that temperatures do not fall below 60° F or rise above 85° F for more than four consecutive hours.



- Operate HVAC (heating and air conditioning) systems continuously in areas housing animals, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

- Ensure the facility/store is ventilated to: 1) enable venting of noxious odors, 2) prevent moisture condensation, and 3) minimize animals' exposure to drafts.

- Maintain lighting at sufficient levels to allow for normal health, behavior and stimulation of all animals. Add supplemental lighting to individual terrariums and aquariums if necessary to support the lighting requirements of specific species. Provide shelter for those species that have low lighting requirements.

- Minimize lighting at night. Either dim or turn off lights in the facility.

*** REMEMBER:** The health and well-being of store animals depends on the proper functioning of heating and cooling systems, as well as proper ventilation and lighting!

MAKING THE SALE Sell Animals in a Responsible Manner



“Frankly, I wouldn’t recommend this one as a child’s first pet. Perhaps I could show you one of our smaller types of snakes instead?”

As a pet store employee, you are in a position to make a difference – on behalf of the animals, the store, and your community. If you keep the best interest of the animal at heart,

you will *do right by the animals and the people who love them*. Sick or infected animals that leave the store can spread disease to other animals – and sometimes people as well. Animals that leave the store with injuries are more likely to be aggressive toward other animals and people. Pets that are not well-suited to a customer's lifestyle might not be well-cared for, and might even be abandoned (See Chapter 5 – *Habittattitude™*.)

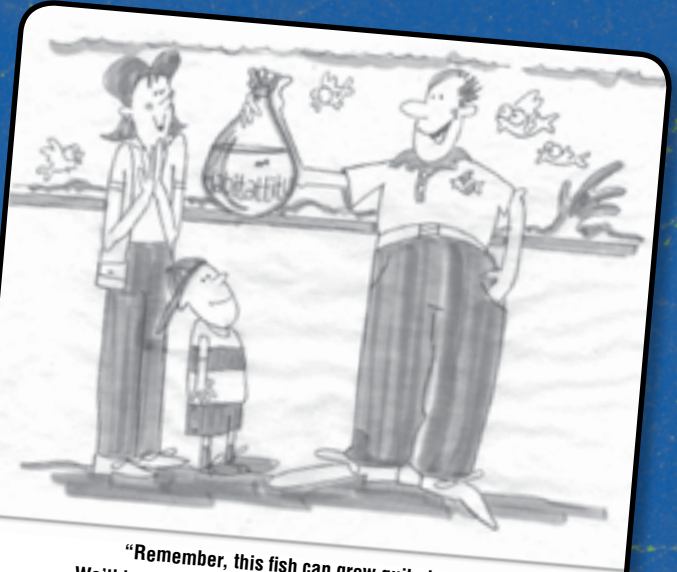
- Based on your knowledge of fish or other animal's specific needs, help customers choose the pet that is most in keeping with: 1) their goals for purchasing or adopting a companion animal and 2) their specific lifestyle. See Chapter 3 – Public Education – for more information.
- When a customer expresses an interest in buying or adopting a particular animal, carefully evaluate the health and well-being of that animal (Refer to the section on *Health Checks*).
- Refrain from selling or adopting out any fish or other animal

that shows signs of, or suspected of having, infections, diseases, illnesses, parasites, injuries, abnormalities, or behavioral problems—unless the store owner provides the purchaser/adopter with written information describing the animal's condition at the time of the sale and the new owner agrees to provide immediate and necessary veterinary care or behavioral training, if necessary.

 **REMEMBER:** Your customers deserve healthy pets and the pets deserve good homes!

Chapter 3

PUBLIC EDUCATION



**"Remember, this fish can grow quite large.
We'll help you pick a bigger tank when you are ready."**

“If there is any great secret of success in life, it lies in the ability to put yourself in the other person’s place and to see things from his point of view – as well as your own.”

Henry Ford, Business Tycoon

Help Them Make Good Great Decisions!

As a pet store employee, you will likely have many opportunities to educate the public on the biology and care of the animals in the store. This is your opportunity to help ensure that the animals get good homes and proper care throughout their lives. What you say and how you say it does make a difference. Thus, we have provided you with the following tips and resources so that you can help customers make well-informed decisions each time they buy or adopt a pet.

Know How to Communicate Effectively

- First and foremost, establish good rapport with the customer(s) – be polite, smile, stand with your arms by your side (not crossed in front of you), and place your attention on their needs and desires.
- Let the customer know that you are there to help them and that you want to help them make the best decision possible when selecting a pet or addressing the needs of pets they already have.
- Be an excellent listener – carefully listen to the customer’s questions and concerns, as well as any information they might volunteer about what they are looking for in a new companion.



- Answer customer questions as thoroughly as possible and also point them to additional information resources within the store (for example, books, animal care sheets, shelf tags).

- If you do not know an answer to a customer's question, admit it – and then turn to a more knowledgeable co-worker or other reliable information source for assistance.
- Refrain from attempting to diagnose or provide any medical advice regarding an animal's health. Instead, encourage the customer to seek guidance from a qualified veterinarian and provide them with a list of local veterinarians if the store provides one for such purposes.
- When asking customers questions regarding the needs of their current pets or pets they are hoping to acquire, carefully try to balance sensitivity to the customer's personal privacy (for example, information on life style) with your need to gather information that will ultimately help them make a wise decision.

Do it even better: Make sure your customers are aware that some types of animals have very specific and elaborate needs that can be hard to provide for in captivity. Encourage them to carefully consider their ability (based on time, budget, available space, etc.) to care for a new companion *before* making a selection.

Do it even better: Some stores offer customers a list of written questions (for example, “What to Consider When Selecting a Companion”) that they can privately answer and then discuss with staff as they so choose. Many stores provide animal care sheets/tips. This helps customers carefully think about their choices, while reducing the risk that a staff member might seem “too nosey” to some customers.

Consider the Following Points

Make every effort to educate customers on best selection, care and safe handling of their pets. Whenever a customer seeks to purchase or adopt a new pet, you are encouraged to constructively communicate the following information:

- When someone brings a pet into their home, they become its caretaker—it is their responsibility to provide for its every need—proper diet, clean water, adequate housing and shelter, exercise, entertainment, and even emotional well-being.

- While many companion animals are short-lived, others can live for decades and some (turtles and parrots, for example) can live for more than 100 years! And, although some pets are small and remain small, others will grow to very large sizes and require specialized feeding and housing.

- The more thought someone puts into choosing a pet, the more likely it is that both the customer and their new companion will have a long, happy relationship.

- An individual's intent for a companion, lifestyle, family composition, work schedule, income, health and physical fitness, and even their personality will make some pets more suitable for them than others.

- There are numerous books and on-line resources that can help customers find the pet that is best suited to their lifestyle. Examples include:

- **Practical Advice and Considerations from the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA)** (<http://www.avma.org/careforanimals/animatedjourneys/petselection/consider.asp>)
- **Advice from the American Animal Hospital Association (AAHA)** (<http://www.healthypets.com>)

■ **Further advice from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC)**

(<http://www.cdc.gov/healthypets/>)

- Local veterinarians, animal breeders, and store staff with expertise on specific animal types can also be excellent resources.
- Once a pet has been selected, the customer can continue to learn about the pet's needs by reading books and magazines and viewing videos/CDs on the topic (let them know what your store offers), as well as consulting with veterinarians and other people (for example, breeders) who specialize in the type of companion animal chosen.

*** REMEMBER:** When it comes to pets, a quick decision is often a poor decision! Help your customers to learn as much as they can before and after they purchase or adopt a new companion.



Chapter 4

BE A ROLE MODEL



**“I think it’s an honor to be a role model
to one person or maybe more than that.
If you are given a chance to be a role model,
I think you should always take it because you can
influence a person’s life in a positive light,
and that’s what I want to do.
That’s what it’s all about.”**

Tiger Woods, Professional Golfer

Know they are looking up to you!

As a pet store employee, you may very well have more responsibility – and more influence – than you could have possibly imagined. Most customers will expect you to be an expert on pet care. Some might expect you to have detailed knowledge of every pet product, every type of pet, pet grooming, pet health, and even pet psychology! Furthermore, the manner

in which you house, handle, and tend to the needs of the pets will be noticed by your customers – everything you do is setting an example for them to follow. You are going to get a lot of questions, and a lot of looks. *Do it right*, and you will have long-term influence on the health and well-being of not only the animals in the store, but also those who have already have homes. The following tips will help you be an effective role model:

■ Be clear about your job description and what is and is not appropriate for you to discuss with customers. If you have any doubts, seek guidance from your supervisor.

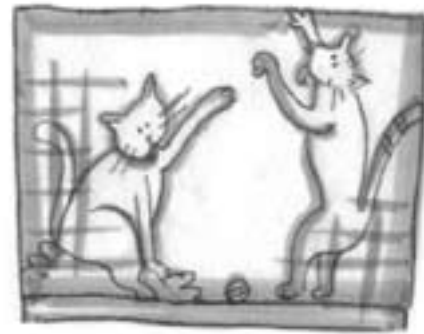
■ Know what you know and what you do not know. Although customers might expect you to have all the answers, a good role model recognizes the limits to his/her knowledge.

■ If you don't know an answer to a customer's question, admit it and let the customer know that you will help them find the answer. You can turn to other co-workers, books, and reliable internet sites.

■ Refrain from giving any advice on the medical treatment of an ill or injured pet. Encourage the pet owner to seek guidance from a local veterinarian, and provide them with contact information if your store keeps a list of local vets.

■ When interacting with families with young children, make an extra effort to communicate with the children about pet care requirements – especially 1) the appropriate methods for animal handling and the frequency of handling, 2) the importance of washing hands after handling, 3) what to feed and *not* feed the pet, 4) the influence of loud noises and chaotic activity on the animal, and 5) how to close the pet's enclosure properly.

*** REMEMBER:** As a pet store employee, you have a lot of influence! Set a good example, share what you know, and seek assistance when you need more information.



Chapter 5

HABITATTITUDE™



"Can you believe it? That was someone's pet?!"

“Integrity is doing the right thing, even if nobody is watching.”

Jim Stovall, National Olympic Weightlifting Champion, Emmy Award Winner, Business Entrepreneur

Spread a Habitattitude™!

Did you know that...?

- Although sixty-three percent of American households report having at least one pet, millions of unwanted pets of various kinds are released into the natural environment each year.

- Many of these abandoned pets do not survive for very long because they are unable to find adequate food or shelter, or fall victim to other animals, people, or auto traffic.



- Abandoned pets (and aquatic plants) that do survive may cause significant harm to the environment by preying on or competing with native fish and wildlife, spreading disease and parasites, and destroying fragile habitats. In short, they can become **invasive species**: non-native species that cause harm, or have the potential to cause harm, to the environment, economies, and/or human health.

- Invasive species are now among the top environmental problems worldwide.

- Invasive species are one of the most significant factors in environmental change globally and are factors in the decline of

approximately 50% of the species currently listed as threatened or endangered under the U.S. Endangered Species Act.

- Invasive species are already costing the U.S. more than \$100 billion/year in impacts and control costs! That's approximately \$1,100 per year, per household.

Habitattitude™ is a proactive campaign designed to:

- Help pet lovers find alternatives to the release of their pets (Habits),
- Ensure that pets are well cared for (Attitudes), and
- Protect the natural environment (Habitats) from the impacts of unwanted pets.

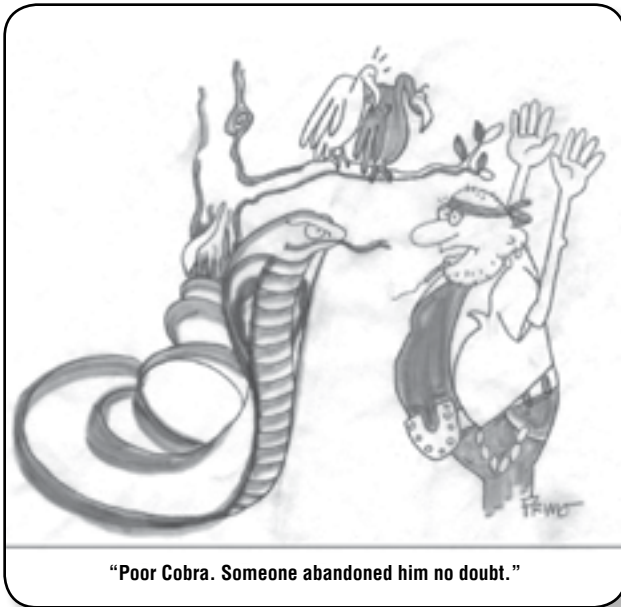
To have a *Habitattitude™* is to:

- Do right by your pet, and
- Do right by our environment.

The *Habitattitude™* campaign is a partnership of the pet industry, Federal and state governments, Native American tribes, environmental organizations, and educational institutions. As a pet store employee, you have the opportunity to be a *Habitattitude™* spokesperson!

You can help spread the campaign message:

- Educate pet store customers how to choose the pet that most suits their 1) desires for acquiring a companion and 2) lifestyle (See Chapter 4 - Public Education). Happy customers are unlikely to abandon their pets.
- Often, pet owners will seek advice from store employees if they are confronted with a pet-related problem. If circumstances arise (lifestyle changes, allergies, etc.) that prevent one of your customers from being able to properly care for their companion(s):
- Be empathetic and have a positive attitude. The pet owner may be in a very difficult and even heart-breaking situation.



- Determine whether or not your store has a policy that would allow you to accept the animal(s) as a return or donation. If so, make the pet owner aware of this option.
- Suggest these additional alternatives to pet abandonment (as appropriate to the species and circumstances):
 - Give/trade with another pet owner or hobbyist.
 - Donate to a local aquarium or other relevant hobbyist society, school, or relevant business.
 - Seek advice/assistance from a local animal shelter or reputable animal rescue group (some specialize in specific types of pets).
 - Contact a veterinarian for guidance about humane euthanasia of animals.

Do it even better: Some stores keep contact lists of hobbyist organizations, local animal shelters, rescue groups, and veterinarians and share these lists with customers needing help with pet placement.

- Tell them about *Habitattitude*TM!!!

- Know the laws about pet abandonment in your state/local area and inform your customers of these laws and potential penalties.

For more information on *Habitattitude*TM, as well as a copy of the Pet Placement Guidelines (alternatives to release) and program news alerts, visit the website at <http://www.habitattitude.net>.

*** REMEMBER:** Releasing a pet into the natural environment puts the animal and the environment at risk! Furthermore, in many states, counties, and cities it is *illegal* to release a pet or aquatic plants into the natural environment. It may also violate Federal law.



Chapter 6

MORE RESOURCES



“It’s what you learn after you know it all that counts.”

Harry S. Truman, Thirty-Third President of the United States

Keep on Learning!

The Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council (PIJAC) provides information resources (some free of charge, others at cost) that support the pet industry’s retailers, animal suppliers, distributors, and manufacturers in their efforts to improve upon animal care, business management, and environmental stewardship. For further information on PIJAC and to access the resources listed below, see <http://www.pijac.org>.

Do it even better: Ask your store owner if he/she is a member of PIJAC. If they are not, encourage them to join. The entire staff will benefit from the membership — as will the animals, customers, and, ultimately, the store’s bottom line.

■ **PetLetter.** Whether the topic is current legislation, industry events or education, the PIJAC *PetLetter* provides the news. The *PetLetter* also contains information on the **PIJAC’s Certification Programs**. It lists the newest “Certified Animal Specialists” and includes a calendar of upcoming seminars.

■ **PetAlerts.** If you need to meet new legal standards or address legislators about a pending bill you need accurate information in a timely manner. PIJAC *PetAlerts* are used to notify PIJAC members of pending legislative issues, as well as to empower them to take appropriate action.

■ **PIJAC Resource Manuals** – A great in-store reference source! These manuals also serve as home study workbooks in **PIJAC's Certification Program**. Manuals are available in seven animal areas:

- Birds (Avian)
- Dogs (Canine)
- Cats (Feline)
- Freshwater Fish
- Marine Fish (Under development)
- Reptile
- Small Animal
- Amphibian (Under development)

■ **Our Pets, Our Health** – This brochure reports information on pet ownership benefits, provided by respected researcher/ professor/lecturer Dr. Alan Beck of Purdue University's School of Veterinary Medicine.

■ **Certification Program** – Contact PIJAC to find out how you, as a store employee, can become a PIJAC certified animal care provider.

Acknowledgements

This booklet, based on the *Animal Care Guidelines for the Retail Pet Industry*, was written by Jamie K. Reaser, Ph.D. and Marshall Meyers of the Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council (PIJAC). Numerous pet store owners and employees, as well as pet product manufacturers and distributors, provided enthusiastic support and input.

We are especially grateful to cartoonist Julie Primovich (primocreative@yahoo.com) for sharing her talents. All cartoons are the property of PIJAC.

“Doing it Right: A Pet Store Employees Guide to Professional Success (and Fun!)” is made possible by grants from:

American Pet Products Manufacturers Association
Pet Industry Distributors Association
World Wide Pet Industry Association
H.H. Backer Associates, Inc.

This booklet is a contribution to the *Habitattitude™* campaign (<http://www.habitattitude.net>).

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Version 1.1, October 2006

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